

Residents learn to go with the flow whenever water problems surface

By Nancy Bringham
Deseret News correspondent

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PROVO — It's getting to be second nature for Provo residents — at least it seems that way after Tuesday's battle with water that didn't look, taste or smell like it should.

Muddy, murky, dirty water came out of the tap instead of clean, clear, fresh water.

Several of Provo's main water sources are above ground and susceptible to storms and other natural elements that can contaminate the system.

While a permanent solution to Provo's perennial bout with murky drinking water is still being worked on by city leaders, most people have learned to make do whenever foul water unexpectedly shows up.

Monday's ice came in handy Tuesday, fruit juices were popular, canned pop sales were brisk and distilled water disappeared from the shelves.

"We bought two tons or more of ice from a local ice manufacturer and took what fresh ice we had out of the machines so we could use it," said Paul Richards, Brigham Young University's director of public relations.

Signs appeared over the water fountains warning thirsty students and employees not to take a sip, he said.

"We did have some purified water at the cafeteria for people to drink, and canned pop was at a special price, but I don't think this slowed us down at all."

Provo School District Superintendent Jim Bergera said every school was notified of the contamination early Tuesday and given instructions to

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boil water before using it.

"We've taken every precaution," Bergera said, adding that drinking fountains were either turned off or put off limits so children wouldn't be tempted.

Patients at Utah Valley Regional Medical Center were given what some people call "spit baths," said Jerry Sorensen, director of public affairs.

"This really put us under quite a handicap," he said. "We have enough distilled water in storage here to take care of our medical needs for several days. The real problem is bathing patients. It's no crisis, but it's an obvious inconvenience."

Just to have enough water on hand for bathing and other personal hygiene needs, Sorensen said, the hospital had to truck in 300 gallons of water from Western General Dairies. The water arrived in half-gallon milk cartons, he said.

Local restaurants and hotels full of customers also were in a predicament.

"We're not serving any water or drinks from our fountain," said Steven Kerr, general manager of The Brick

Oven Restaurant. "We brought in some drinking water and we had some extra ice stored, but we couldn't serve free root beer with our pizza like we usually do."

Restaurant employees washed their hands in a solution of bleach water and used distilled water in food preparations, he said.

"It's pretty much business as usual. It's really surprising that most people didn't know or care about the contaminated water. It was like it was no big deal," Kerr said. "I even had one lady who said it was fine with her as long as we just piped our root beer into her home."

The Excelsior Hotel managed to serve its noon banquet and keep operations up to normal speed, said General Manager Jim Ferguson.

"We're just about at capacity today, and we've been taking extra precautions, but we haven't heard any complaints. I guess everyone got their shower this morning without a problem," Ferguson said. "We've posted a notice for the guests, and we're just adapting like everyone else."

Cynthia and James French, owners of The Knight Block Grill, said they had to melt Tuesday's ice in order to wash Wednesday's dirty dishes and were hoping everything would soon be back to normal.

Jenkins opposes a hydro plant, says any action would be premature

By Kristi Glissmeyer 3-5-87
Deseret News staff writer

PROVO — Mayor Joseph Jenkins says he opposes constructing a hydroelectric plant at Upper Falls in Provo Canyon, a project the Provo Metropolitan Water District has been working on for three years.

In a letter to the district board Chairman LaVere Merritt, Jenkins said any action taken concerning building a hydroelectric facility is premature.

"I have some strong feelings that any action in this regard is premature, may not be in the best interests of Provo city and, if proven feasible, should be handled by our (city) Energy Department," Jenkins wrote.

"We've put thousands and thousands of dollars into this project already, and now the city wants to pull it out from under us," District Manager Wayne Hillier said in a district board meeting Tuesday.

Merritt told Hillier the letter most likely is a product of misunderstanding. City Water Director Merrill Bingham suggested the district board and city administrators meet to more

thoroughly discuss the problem.

In a detailed letter, Jenkins listed seven reasons why he cannot support the Upper Falls project.

Over the past three years, the water district has spent \$28,000 in feasibility studies and improvement of Upper Falls facilities that used to be used for collection of city water.

The district is about a year away from constructing a generating plant at a cost of about \$130,000. Jenkins' protests came when the district asked the city to approve a memorandum of understanding saying the district could use the property.

The memorandum is required before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will give the district permission to operate the plant, which is expected to bring in about \$10,000 per year from power sales.

"We've done an awful lot for and in behalf of the city, and we need money generated through the plant to operate the district," Hillier said. The district is funded through sell of Deer Creek water. If the Upper Falls plant proved successful others would be built, he said.

Jenkins said that to use such a facility the city would have to obtain approval from Utah Municipal Power Agency, which requires Provo receive all its power through UMPA.

"We cannot even use any power developed at Upper Falls without that power going into the UMPA system," Jenkins wrote.

The city already has entered into a tentative agreement to receive an additional 7.5 megawatts from Mother Earth Industries in Cove Fort, Millard County, which must be taken before any other power source, Jenkins said.

"Why should we create another electric power department within Provo city when we have a power department that has been effectively managing our electric power resources for some 40 years?" Jenkins wrote. "I prefer any analysis or operation of any facilities involving electric power be under the direction of the Energy Department."

Hillier said the district has worked closely with the city Energy Department in studying the feasibility of building a plant. The district received permission nearly two years ago from the city Power Board to go ahead with the project, he said.

Upper Falls
Winter Doreen Daniel Bayton



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